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December 11, 2018

VIA ECFS

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Docket No. 18-353

Dear Ms. Dortch:

Cloud Alliance LLC is a small, terrestrial fixed-wireless internet service provider (WISP) in Vermont. We serve very rural towns in four counties of the central Vermont and Northeast Kingdom regions of the state.

Once primarily using 900 MHz spectrum to penetrate dense forests on difficult terrain, we migrated our services to Part 90 (3650-3700MHz) spectrum with license WQLE338, granted in December of 2009. Prior to securing the license and commencing operations, Cloud Alliance arranged for a waiver from MCI/Verizon to operate within their existing Earth station's exclusionary zone. We have, for some time, relied on this spectrum to deliver HD-streamable, fixed-4G WiMAX services to fully 95% of our subscribers.

Cloud Alliance is highly dependent on its ability to utilize the 3650–3700 MHz band. We applied for and received "grandfathered" protection of our equipment during the transition period from Part 90 to Part 96. We expect to upgrade in a reasonable and orderly fashion to the Citizens Broadband Radio Service (CBRS) 3550–3700 MHz band. We look forward with excitement to using this wider spectrum under Part 96.

If, a few years ago, had a spectrum access system (SAS) been ready; had an environmental sensing capability (ESC) been ready; had

certified professional installers (CPI) been available; had several manufacturers been ready with FCC-approved Part 96 equipment; had our own vendor's equipment been ready with FCC-approved Part 96 firmware upgrades; then perhaps Cloud Alliance could have possibly transitioned to Part 96 rules by April of the coming year. Unfortunately, none of these are in place.

Further, it would be an enormous financial burden to us to make this transition—originally expected to take up to five years. A full "forklift upgrade" is out of the question for us. It would be financially untenable, and the near-certain disruptions to our subscribers, who completely depend on us for their access to our broadband service would be devastating. In addition to typical entertainment and social media uses of broadband, many of these subscribers run small businesses from home or work from home, and their children depend on us for schooling.

Were all transition systems in place on time, Cloud Alliance would not be submitting this comment. We would have been well on the way to completing our upgrades. Since they aren't, it is a big problem for us and for all other small rural providers like us. There is an obvious solution to this problem. Extend the transition deadline from April 2019 for about three years.

Thankfully, our trade association WISPA and the Utilities Technology Council (UTC) have joined in petitioning for a waiver of the current deadline. Cloud Alliance strongly urges the Commission to grant this waiver. Many hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of rural broadband subscribers need this short reprieve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MB', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Michael Birnbaum
managing partner